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MIGRATION

Migration and Climate Change

Tackling environment–migration challenges and fostering climate-change adaptation

The issue

Climate change and human mobility are complex, interlinked processes. Sudden climate events can cause the immediate displacement of people, while gradual environmental changes can lead to slower, but steadier forms of migration. Migration has long been part of human life. Rural communities have traditionally used migration to adapt to harsh climatic conditions and to respond to the seasonal nature of agriculture. In more recent years, however, climate change has put mounting pressure on people’s livelihoods and has affected mobility patterns. Repeated exposure to intense climate events can turn traditional short-distance temporary movements into long-distance migration and cause people to permanently leave their homeland. If undertaken out of necessity, migration can increase the vulnerability of both migrants and their families. Well-managed migration can minimize these impacts and contribute positively to the capacity of communities of origin to adapt to climate change.

The action

The programme aims to ensure that migration from climate change-affected areas is a voluntary and informed choice, not a forced survival strategy. It works to make sure that communities have the means to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change, as well as to strengthen the positive linkages between migration and climate adaptation. To this end, the programme focuses on three key elements:

- Enhancing climate-change adaptation and livelihood resilience by providing alternatives to migration and addressing key issues in the formulation and implementation of national adaptation plans, such as climate-smart agriculture, green job creation and land restoration;
- Fostering synergies and policy coherence across migration, agriculture and climate change by increasing coordination and promoting integrated approaches to the migration–environment nexus by raising awareness and promoting policy dialogue;
- Harnessing the potential of migration for sustainable rural development by untapping migrant remittances to rural households and communities of origin, encouraging investment in climate-resilient livelihoods, transfer of knowledge and skills development.

The issue in numbers



Programme targets



The budget



Expected results

- Greater livelihood resilience and adaptive capacity of rural communities in migration-prone areas;
- Increased coordination and policy coherence between the areas of migration, agriculture and climate change;
- Strengthened government capacity to understand the links between migration and climate change and to develop models to facilitate migrant investment in climate-resilient livelihoods at home;
- Increased diaspora potential directed to climate-change adaptation and livelihood resilience;
- Migrants and migration-affected communities benefit from migration as a sustainable-development and climate-change adaptation strategy.

Geographic focus

The programme responds to regional and **country level** needs and requests, addressing climate and migration hotspots. Priority regions include West Africa, East Africa, the Sahel, Northern Africa, Central Asia, South and South-East Asia and Central and South America.

In partnership with

At country level, FAO partners with ministries and governmental bodies responsible for environment, migration, agriculture and rural development, as well as with other relevant public, private and civil-society stakeholders. It also collaborates with UN organizations, in particular, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).



SDG contribution



Building climate resilience in rural Nepal

In Nepal, migration is one way in which the most vulnerable groups cope with the impacts of extreme climate events. Challenging farming conditions, exacerbated by climate change, have led to insufficient foodgrain production in rural areas and forced many people to move to cities or abroad in search of jobs. FAO has provided climate information services and promoted community-driven approaches to building climate resilience, with gender-sensitive good practices for climate risk management, resource conservation and livelihood diversification. The introduction of stress-tolerant crop varieties, for example, saw yields of rice, wheat and maize increase by 54 percent, 19 percent and 91 percent, respectively, between 2009 and 2011 alone. This increase in resilience has contributed to efforts to temper climate-induced migration.



Why invest?

Migration and climate change are among the greatest challenges of our time. Investment is needed to scale up action, particularly in countries facing severe climate-change effects, where the poor are already struggling to survive. FAO can help to address these challenges, with expertise in agriculture, climate change and rural migration. Rural communities need knowledge and tools to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change, to ensure that migration is an option, not a necessity. If well managed, migration can improve livelihoods and community resilience through remittances and skills transfer. These elements, combined with the right policies and programmes, are critical to safeguarding rural communities. National measures on climate-change mitigation and adaptation also need to meet social and environmental objectives to be fully sustainable, with implications for migration. An holistic approach at global, regional, national and local level is key.

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